

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SAN SA 02056 032346Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4199

S E C R E T SAN SALVADOR 2056

EXDIS

FOR TODMAN FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, US, ES, SHUM, OVIP (TODMAN, TERENCE A.)
SUBJECT: RELATIONS WITH THE GOES

REF: (A) STATE 098384, (B) STATE 098404

1. THE
INVOLVED MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM AND I HAVE
DISCUSSED REFTEL (A) (WITH ELEANOR HICKS OF ARA/CEN
SITTING IN) AND HAVE SADLY CONCLUDED WHAT HAS EMERGED AFTER
TWO MONTHS OF GESTATION IS A TOTALLY INADEQUATE RESPONSE TO
THE PROBLEMS OF THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. WE BELIEVE THE
EXERCISE IS DOOMED TO FAIL IN ADVANCING USG INTERESTS IN
THE RICHARDSON CASE AND RELATED MATTERS. FROM THE PERSPECTIVE
OF SAN SALVADOR AND EMBASSY, ANALYSIS OF HOW THE GOES AND
INTERESTED SECTORS WILL INTERPRET, AND MISINTERPRET THE
VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED SCENARIO, I FEEL OBLIGATED
TO REGISTER MY MOUNTING CONCERN THAT A BASIC LACK OF
UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL CULTURE AND POLITICS CONTINUES TO
PLAGUE USG ANALYSIS OF THE NATURE AND DIMENSIONS OF ITS
PROBLEMS WITH THE GOES. ALTHOUGH THE REFTEL DID NOT
SOLICIT EMBUSSY COMMENT, I WISH TO MAKE ONE FURTHER
EFFORT AT DISPELLING THE MISUNDERSTANDING.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 SAN SA 02056 032346Z

2. THE MAJOR IMPEDIMENT IN HAVING THE GOES COMPREHEND
THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE USG VIEWS THE
ASSASSINATION OF ONE OF ITS CITIZENS WHILE IN ANOTHER
NATION'S CUSTODY HAS BEEN THAT THE GOES HAS MANAGED
TO CONVINCE ITSELF THAT I, AND ONE OR TWO MEMBERS OF
THE EMBASSY STAFF, HAVE BEEN ACTING ON OUR OWN BEHALF

AND IN PURSUIT OF PERSONAL BIASES ON THE RICHARDSON CASE, AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS. THIS SELF-DETERMINED CONVICTION HAS NOT BEEN DISPELLED BY THE BEST EFFORTS I HAVE MADE TO PREFACE ALL MESSAGES WITH THE FACT THAT I AM ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS, NOR BY EXPRESSIONS ALONG THE SAME LINES BY OTHER EMBASSY ELEMENTS. THE BELIEF HAS BEEN CONVERTED TO THE STATUS OF ABSOLUTE FACT BY THE DEAFENING SILENCE THAT HAS EMANATED FROM WASHINGTON - NOT A SINGLE PUBLIC REFERENCE OR COMMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT ON NEWS STORIES DEALING WITH RICHARDSON'S POSSIBLE MURDER. NEITHER THE GOES NOR THE SALVADORAN PUBLIC HAS ACCEPTED THE EMBASSY CLAIM THAT THIS IS A MOST SERIOUS BILATERAL PROBLEM IN THE FACE OF THAT SILENCE. CALLING AMBASSADOR BERTRAND GALINDO INTO THE DEPARTMENT AND CONVEYING A CONFIDENTIAL ORAL EXPRESSION OF USG CONCERN (AS REPORTED IN STATE 069678) HAD NO RPT NO LOCAL IMPACT WHATSOEVER.

3. WHETHER OR NOT I CAN RATIONALLY EXPLAIN THE ORIGIN AND PERPETRATION OF THE GOES MISPERCEPTION OF WHOM IT IS DEALING WITH ON THE RICHARDSON MATTER, THE FACT REMAINS THAT THIS IS THE GOES ANALYSIS. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, FOR ME TO SEEK YET ANOTHER APPOINTMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT (AND PRESIDENT-ELECT) TO GO OVER THE SAME ARGUMENTS ONCE AGAIN, AS PROPOSED PARA 2 REFTEL (A), WOULD BE AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY. TO DO SO IN THE LAST DAYS OF MY TENURE WOULD ONLY EMPHASIZE MY PERSONAL "DESPERATION" IN GOES EYES. TO BELIEVE THAT THE ACCOMPANYING PRESENCE OF A MID-LEVEL DEPARTMENT SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 SAN SA 02056 032346Z

EMISSARY, A COMPLETE UNKNOWN TO THE SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE GOES WITH WHOM WE WOULD BE DEALING, WHO COULD SOMEHOW OVERCOME THE IMPEDIMENT BY ORALLY CONVEYING HIS SUPPORT FOR EMBASSY ACTIONS TO DATE, IS WISHFUL THINKING. MOLINA, ROMERO AND OTHERS WILL ONLY BE CONVINCED THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION INSTRUCTED THIS EMBASSY TO VIGOROUSLY PURSUE THE RICHARDSON MATTER IF SOMEONE THEY RPT THEY RECOGNIZE AS A SENIOR ADMINISTRATION SPOKESMAN CONVEYS THE MESSAGE. A COUNTRY DIRECTOR DOES NOT RPT NOT FILL THAT BILL. ALTHOUGH MOLINA IS PRESIDENT OF AN ADMITTEDLY TINY COUNTRY, HE BELIEVES HIMSELF ENTITLED TO HAVING IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT MESSAGES DELIVERED TO HIM BY SOMEONE OF EQUAL OR NEAR-EQUAL RANK. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT IF MR. MATTHEWS IS THE ONLY ONE WHO

CAN BE SPARED TO BRING THE MESSAGE, THE MINIMUM CLOUT THAT HE MUST CARRY WITH HIM IS A WRITTEN LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OR SECRETARY OF STATE.

4. I WOULD PROPOSE AN ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION. REFTEL (B) INFORMS US THAT YOU WILL

BE MAKING A FIVE-NATION TRIP TO SOUTH AMERICA FROM MAY 8-16. A SHORT STOPOVER ON THE WAY NORTH WOULD APPEAR TO BE AN IDEAL METHOD FOR THE USG TO CONVEY THE IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY WE ATTACH TO THE MESSAGE YOU WOULD DELIVER. WE WOULD WANT YOU TO LEAVE A WRITTEN COMMUNICATION FROM THE PRESIDENT OR THE SECRETARY OF STATE, OR AT LEAST FROM YOURSELF, SETTING FORTH USG POSITION WHICH WE RECOMMEND BE RELEASED TO PRESS AT WASHINGTON JUST AFTER YOUR DEPARTURE FROM SAN SALVADOR. I WISH TO REITERATE MY AWARENESS THAT EL SALVADOR IS A MINUSCULE ENTITY WITH LITTLE TO MAKE IT THE EQUIVALENT IN US INTEREST TERMS OF THE OTHER COUNTRIES YOU WILL VISIT - EXCEPT FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLE INVOLVED IN THE RICHARDSON MATTER. I DEEPLY BELIEVE THAT IF THE USG CANNOT CONVEY THE POINTS IT HAS

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 SAN SA 02056 032346Z

TRIED TO COMMUNICATE IN SUCH A CLEAR AND ABSOLUTE CASE OF THE VIOLATION OF A US CITIZEN'S ULTIMATE HUMAN RIGHT, HIS LIFE, TO THE GOVERNMENT OF A COUNTRY THE SIZE OF EL SALVADOR, THEN IT HAD BETTER WITHDRAW FROM ITS ANNOUNCED PURSUIT OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. I AM ALSO CONVINCED THAT WHAT THE USG DOES, OR IS PERCEIVED TO DO IN THE RICHARDSON CASE IN EL SALVADOR, WILL HAVE IMPACT ON LATER EFFORTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD IN OTHER PARTS OF LATIN AMERICA. WHILE NEWS OF EVENTS IN EL SALVADOR RECEIVE MINIMAL COVERAGE IN US MEDIA, THAT IS NOT THE CASE IN

THE PRESS OF THE REST OF LATIN AMERICA.

5. IN THE ABSENCE OF EITHER MATTHEWS BEARING A WRITTEN MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OR SECRETARY, OR YOUR BEING ABLE TO STOP OVER, ALSO WITH A WRITTEN MESSAGE IT IS THE EMBASSY'S OPINION THAT IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO TAKE NO RPT NO SCENARIO ACTIONS RATHER THAN IMPLEMENT THOSE DESCRIBED REFTEL (A).
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